

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for decontaminating the necks of thermoplastic preforms intended for making into containers by a blow molding or stretch-blow molding procedure, the method comprising wherein, as the
feeding the preforms are fed one after the other into a container manufacturing unit;
spraying an upstream chamber through which the preforms pass ~~first through an upstream chamber into which~~ with a decontaminating liquid ~~is sprayed continuously so as to maintain in this chamber a fog atmosphere of said decontaminating liquid product so as to contact with which~~
~~the necks of the preforms are brought into contact;~~ and then
passing the preforms in front of ultraviolet lamps arranged so as to completely irradiate the necks of the preforms wetted by the decontaminating product for at least a minimum predetermined period of time, before reaching a device that loads them into ~~at the~~ manufacturing unit.
2. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fog is kept flowing through the upstream chamber so as to facilitate its renewal.
3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the decontaminating product is hydrogen peroxide H₂O₂.

4. (Currently Amended) An installation for the decontamination preforms while they are moving of ~~the necks of preforms delivered one after the other~~ to a loading device, the installation comprising:

a decontamination installation structurally and functionally connected to a preform feeder installation including a means for moving the preforms one after the other, said decontamination installation comprising ultraviolet lamps arranged so that the ultraviolet radiation completely irradiates necks of the moving preforms,

wherein said preforms ~~are being~~ made of thermoplastic configured to produce and being ~~intended for making into~~ containers by blow molding or stretch-blow molding, said ~~decontamination installation being structurally and functionally connected to a preform feeder installation comprising means for moving the preforms one after the other, said decontamination installation comprising ultraviolet lamps arranged so that the ultraviolet radiation completely irradiates the necks of the moving preforms,~~

wherein the decontamination installation also includes, upstream of the ultraviolet lamps, a chamber traversed by said preform movement means of the feeder installation and in which spray means are provided for spraying a decontaminating product ~~so in such a way~~ as to maintain a fog of the decontaminating product inside said chamber.

5. (Currently Amended) The installation as claimed in claim 4, wherein the spray means comprise at least two spray nozzles arranged one on either side of the preform movement means and above these, with their respective axes substantially aimed ~~roughly in~~ the direction of the necks of the moving preforms.

6. (Currently Amended) The installation as claimed in claim 4, further comprising wherein suction means ~~are~~ connected to the chamber in order to create a flow through the ~~chamber~~~~latter such so~~ as to prevent local accumulations of the decontaminating product in suspension.

7. (Currently Amended) The installation as claimed in claim 4, wherein inside the chamber, the preform movement means are surmounted, above the necks of the preforms, by a rod of ~~relatively small~~ transverse dimension smaller than~~relative to the~~ a diameter of the necks, this rod forming a member that prevents the preforms being lifted up but allows access by the fog of decontaminating product to ~~an~~the inside wall of the necks of the preforms.

8. (Previously Presented) The installation as claimed in claim 4, wherein the preform movement means comprise an inclined slideway down which the preforms slide by gravity one after the other and in that this slideway passes through the chamber.

9. (New) A method for decontaminating the necks of thermoplastic preforms intended for making into containers by a blow molding or stretch-blow molding procedure, the method comprising

feeding the preforms one after the other into a container manufacturing unit;

spraying an upstream chamber through which the preforms pass with a decontaminating liquid so as to maintain in this chamber a fog atmosphere of said decontaminating liquid so as to contact necks of the preforms; and

passing the preforms in front of ultraviolet lamps arranged so as to completely irradiate the necks of the preforms wetted by the decontaminating product for at least a minimum predetermined period of time, before reaching a device that loads them into a manufacturing unit.

10. (New) The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the fog is kept flowing through the upstream chamber so as to facilitate its renewal.

11. (New) The method as claimed in claim 9 wherein the decontaminating product is hydrogen peroxide H_2O_2 .

12. (New) An installation for the decontamination preforms while they are moving one after the other to a loading device, the installation comprising:

a decontamination installation structurally and functionally connected to a preform feeder installation including a conveying device which moves the preforms one after the other, said decontamination installation including ultraviolet lamps arranged so that the ultraviolet radiation completely irradiates necks of the moving preforms,

wherein said preforms are made of thermoplastic configured to produce containers by blow molding or stretch-blow molding,

wherein the decontamination installation also includes, upstream of the ultraviolet lamps, a chamber traversed by said preform conveying device a decontamination device for spraying a decontaminating product so as to maintain a fog of the decontaminating product inside said chamber.

13. (New) The installation as claimed in claim 12, wherein the decontamination device comprises at least two spray nozzles arranged one on either side of the conveying device and above these, with their respective axes substantially aimed in the direction of the necks of the moving preforms.

14. (New) The installation as claimed in claim 12, further comprising a suction unit connected to the chamber in order to create a flow through the chamber so as to prevent local accumulations of the decontaminating product in suspension.

15. (New) The installation as claimed in claim 12, wherein inside the chamber, the preform conveying device is surmounted, above the necks of the preforms, by a rod of a transverse dimension smaller than a diameter of the necks, this rod forming a member that prevents the preforms being lifted up but allows access by the fog of decontaminating product to an inside wall of the necks of the preforms.

16. (New) The installation as claimed in claim 12, wherein the preform conveying device comprises an inclined surface in which the preforms slide by gravity one after the other and this inclined surface passes through the chamber.